levels in the Public Health delivery system. The shortages reduce the range and quality of health services available to the citizens. The Government has undertaken several steps to remedy the situation and strengthen the delivery of health services in all the States.

The Government has launched National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) on 12th April 2005 for the period 2005-2012 to provide accessible, affordable and quality health services to the poorest households in remotest rural regions of the country.

The thrust of NRHM is on establishing a fully functional, community owned, decentralized health delivery system. The NRHM seeks to compensate various gaps through sector wide approach, enhanced funding, local untied and flexible funds and overall capacity building in the health system.

Under NRHM, the community Health Worker called Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) has now been extended to entire country. This has substantially improved accessibility of health services for the citizens.

Human resource augmentation is a key component of the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM). NRHM includes strategies like local recruitment of human resources on contract, recruitment for specific health facilities by the Rogi Kalyan Samitis, incentives and hard area allowances, blended payments to health functionaries for difficult areas, rational transfer/posting policies etc. The capacity for pre-service and in-service trainings for critical skills has also been expanded under NRHM to address the availability and retention of key skills at health facilities. The successful implementation of NRHM has reduced the shortage of key health functionaries and improved availability of critical skills at public health facilities.

Doctor population in Assam

1319. SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) the discipline-wise number of doctors in Allopathy, Homoeopathy, Ayurvedic, Unani and Yoga appointed under NRHM in Assam till August, 2008;

(b) the number of Primary Health Centres (PHC) yet to be upgraded in Assam and shortfall in total number of medical and paramedical staff against such requirement in Assam;

(c) the action taken by Governemnt to equip and staff those PHCs;

(d) whether Government have exempted appointment of Homoeopathy practitioners under NRHM in Assam;

(e) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(f) if not, the reasons for inordinate delay in their appointment?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI PANABAKA LAKSHMI): (a) The staff including the doctors are appointed by the respective State Governments including Assam for the facilities created and upgraded under National Rural Health

Mission. The staff under National Rural Health Mission is appointed only on contractual basis. As on 31st August 2008, a total of 249 AYUSH doctors have been appointed on contractual basis in the State of Assam.

(b) Under NRHM funds are released to all States/UTs including the State of Assam for NRHM additionalities including upgradation of PHCs. The number of PHC to be upgraded depends on the priority of the State Governments as reflected in their annual Programme Implementation Plan which is examined and approved by National Programme Coordination Committee (NPCC) under NRHM.

The regular staff is appointed by the State Government. However, to tide over the problem of shortfall, the staff including doctors, specialists and paramedics is being appointed under contract basis from the funds being released under NRHM by the Central Government. As on 31st August, 2008, 26225 ASHAs have been selected, 5029 SCs are functional with one ANM and 1694 SCs are functioning with second ANM. No PHC is functioning without doctor and 149 PHCs are functioning with 3 staff nurses. Apart from the regular specialists, 117 Specialists and 2230 Staff Nurses have been appointed on contract basis under NRHM for CHCs.

(c) A Task Group constituted under the National Rural Health Mission under the Chairmanship of Director General of Health Services has recommended the following measures to ensure the services of doctors in rural areas which have been issued to all States/UTs including Assam :

- Increase in the age of retirement of doctors to 65 years preferably with posting near hometown;
- Decentralization of recruitment at district level;
- Walk-in-interview and contractual appointment of doctors;
- Enhancing the salary for posting in rural areas by one-third;
- Increasing the admission capacity in medical colleges for Anesthesia;
- Reviving the Diploma Course in Anesthesia;
- To start one year Certificate Course in Anesthesia for Medical Officers working in the system at present to be given by National Board of Examination;
- Recognition of five hundred bedded Hospitals to provide the facility for conducting the above course;
- Hiring of private practitioners on case-to-case basis.

(d) to (f) The regular staff is appointed by the State Government.

Diseases due to contaminated water

1320. SHRI RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of deaths caused due to contaminated water and poor sanitation and hygiene conditions in the country during the last three years ending 31.03.2008;

(b) the targets fixed in the Millennium Development Goals for safe drinking water and sanitation, and the extent to which such targets have been achieved so far, and